



COLLABORATIONS

The Newsletter for California's Community-Focused Court Planning Initiative

(Duplication Authorized)

January-February
1999

"A new era of collaboration between county courts, the Judicial Council, and California's communities will lead to a renewal of public trust and confidence in the administration of justice and the primacy of the rule of law in California." —Chief Justice Ronald George

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County Spotlight

Sacramento, San Mateo,
and Butte counties forge
ahead in local planning
efforts

Sacramento draws on Focus Group Data: Focus Groups have provided Sacramento's Community-Focused Strategic Planning Team with a wealth of data for their planning efforts. Under the leadership of **Hon. Ronald B. Robie**, and with the focus-group effort spearheaded by **Kari Kelso** (Judicial Administration Fellow), the Sacramento team began its planning process by assessing the public's perception of the local judicial system.

The team decided on a three-phase approach to the focus group process. In phase 1, jury groups were used to gather data for the county's mission, vision, and values statements. Phase 2 focus groups were drawn from key internal and external stakeholder groups and the data gathered provided specific plan input. In phase 3, the team will decide if it wishes to organize focus groups with members drawn from specific unit groups. In the six focus groups convened from the county's jury pool, questions presented for discussion addressed three broad aspects of the Trial Court Performance Standards –

access, fairness, and timeliness – that parallel the Judicial Council's priority goals and directions. The data gathered from the meetings indicated that improving customer service and convenience were primary concerns for this group of public users.

Reports Ms. Kelso, "the groups were invaluable in understanding what issues are considered most important in improving our court's performance and community outreach through communication."

Our First Newsletter: Continuing the Dialogue

With this first edition of Collaborations, the AOC renews its commitment to supporting the efforts of California's locally based community-focused court planning teams. Each edition will report the latest in state court planning progress, tools, and strategies. We encourage planning team members, judges, court employees and other friends of the court to contribute to Collaborations.

AOC Revises County Planning Team Submission schedule:

Cancelled: submission of county status reports, February 1999;
Next deadline: Draft County Strategic Plan, due at AOC, June 1999.

San Mateo seeks public participation on a variety of fronts: San Mateo's planning team has been especially busy since last May's conference. With approximately 35 planning meetings to their credit –
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(San Mateo continued):
some of them conducted with

Planning Team Survey Completed?
County Planning Team Follow-up
Questions were due 12/98. Lost your survey form? Phone 415.904.5217.

high-tech efficiency through e-mail conferencing – San Mateo’s court planning team has obviously taken the challenge of soliciting public participation to heart. More than 50 citizens attended the county’s first public meeting (there have been 23 focus groups and public forums altogether!) of the court and the community held last July 16, 1998, in Palo Alto. Lead by **Hon. Marta Diaz**, planning team leader, and **Hon. Linda Gemello**, the forum was a resounding success with citizens voicing their feelings about the court and its far-reaching impact on their lives. Topics ranged from traffic tickets to creating a grammar school civics class that would teach core elements of the criminal justice system. The team has taken its charge to the people on other fronts as well. San Mateo’s Superior Court has established its own Community Outreach Strategic Planning Committee website (<http://www.co.sanmateo.ca.us/sanmateocourts/comoutreach.htm>). The website lists a full schedule of community planning group meetings, an “open invitation” to the public for its participation, a press release, and a complete index of court services, including traffic, family law, domestic violence, small claims and fee schedules, etc. Regarding the team’s many efforts, Judge Diaz communicates, “we think that this has been the most difficult work, but the greatest learning experience we could hope for. The community rewards are great.” Judge Diaz has encouraging words for other teams involved in the process: “We’ve done most of our work in less than 8 months, so it is possible to do it if you

Got Questions?
Checkout the AOC Website
For Court Community
Collaboration:

www.courtinfo.ca.gov/programs/community
The latest information and updates
on community-focused court
planning

just get out there and get started.”

Butte County organizes to meet the challenge of community-focused planning: Lead by **Hon. Darrell W. Stevens**, Butte county’s planning team approaches their planning goals via a specific agenda of responsibilities. By organizing planning tasks into a formal “Calendar of Accomplishments,” the
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(Butte continued): team moves through a formidable agenda. “The calendar,” explains **Sharol Strickland**, Court Executive Officer, “outlines specific tasks and projects that will be accomplished over six calendar quarters.” The county has even established an electronic mechanism to track and monitor the progress of planning projects. Projects for a given quarter are listed on the calendar by priority and committee members are assigned to the individual projects. Each project has its own action plan specifying the intent of the project, the proposed completion date, implementation steps, parties responsible for the implementation of those steps, team coordinator and team members. The coordinator is responsible for submission of the project action plan and for keeping

the project on track. One of the projects on the calendar is to conduct an extensive stakeholder survey. Says Ms. Strickland, “the survey will be an excellent mechanism to advise our customers and stakeholders that the court is reaching out to the community for input on what the community values.”

**County Planning Team
Deadline: Draft Strategic
Plan due at AOC, June 1999**

Community-Focused Court Planning Implementation Committee Releases Tools and Resources for County Planning Teams

The most recent AOC contribution to the cause of community-focused planning was released and mailed to planning team leaders in December. Community-Focused Court Planning Resource Tools, a Binder of Resources for County Planning Teams contains the long-awaited **sample strategic plans**, including a **template** that can be adapted to local needs. In addition to the sample plan, the binder contains information on **focus groups** and how to use them as an effective data gathering mechanism in local court planning. This section of the binder draws heavily on the experience of other courts, including Sacramento's highly successful focus group experience. Planning team members will find organizational as well as operational procedures and a sampling of focus group questions and facilitator guidelines.

A **public information flyer** defining the statewide community-focused court planning

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(County Resource Binder):

initiative is also enclosed in the binder. This document, created in response to the suggestion of **Hon. Richard L. Freeborn** of Lake County, strives to explain the initiative in laymen's terms. A document master is enclosed in the binder for easy duplication.

The AOC plans to update the binder periodically in

response to local needs.

Need an extra copy of the Tools and Resources Binder? Contact Jack Urquhart 415.904.5217, for an electronic copy.

Coming Soon:
Video Training Cassettes featuring excerpts from last May's Statewide Conference are being prepared. The videos will teach the 5-Step Planning process introduced at the conference.

Have a need for local court planning tools? Let the AOC know what tools would be helpful to you at the community level. While we can't guarantee to fulfill them all, your suggestions will be seriously considered. Contact info:

shelley_stump@jud.ca.gov
415.396.9310
or
jack_urquhart@jud.ca.gov
415.904.5217

Court/Community Outreach Task Force Prepares to Present Report and Outreach Handbook to Judicial Council

On February 9th, 1999, the **Special Task Force on Court/Community Outreach** will submit its report and recommendations – including the long-awaited outreach handbook, Dialogue: Courts Reaching Out to Their Communities – A Handbook for Creating and Enhancing Court and Community Collaboration, to the Judicial Council. The Report represents the culmination of the task force's 20-month commitment to gathering information and public comment. Chaired by **Hon. Veronica S. McBeth**, a nationally recognized leader in court community outreach, the task force fulfilled its charge to study and suggest recommended approaches to court community outreach by surveying existing state and national models; seeking public comment; identifying impact, benefits, and constraints; outlining areas of need and potential community collaborators; identifying ethical constraints; and identifying the role of the

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(Task Force Reports continued):

Judicial Council and the AOC. As a result of this work, the task force report includes recommendations for Judicial Council actions, recommendations for a new standard of judicial administration and revised rules of court, and the court community outreach handbook. These products of the task force are intended to support the advancement of court and community

AOC Revises County Planning Team submission schedule:

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County Planning Team
Deadline: Draft Strategic
Plans Due at AOC June 1999

collaboration in California. The handbook includes an extensive ethics analysis, a discussion of community justice initiatives, and
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 (Task Force Reports continued): practical tools, samples, and resources to help courts immediately take action in public outreach and education efforts. In addition the handbook contains a computer disk on which all of the handbook's tools are stored in an easily accessed electronic format for individual court use. These disk documents can be revised to reflect specific local needs, formatted, reproduced, and put to use in short order.
 Following approval by the Judicial Council in February, the AOC plans to
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 (Task Force Reports continued): reproduce the Handbook for

statewide and national distribution. A grant from **The Foundation of the State Bar of California** has been obtained for this purpose, and local teams will be updated in Collaborations, The Newsletter for California's Community-Focused Court Planning Initiative, about the progress and availability of this useful publication.

Contributions for Collaborations?
 Questions?
 Submit to Jack Urquhart
 CALS-R&P
 415.904.5217 (voice)
 415.396.9388 (FAX)
 jack_urquhart@jud.ca.gov



COLLABORATIONS

The Newsletter for
 California's Community-Focused
 Court Planning Initiative

Administrative Office of the Courts
 303 Second Street, South Tower
 San Francisco, CA 94107-1366
 Attn: CALS
 J. Urquhart

Address
 Label
 here

New Address/Phone:

Effective 2/16/99, Administrative Offices of the Courts (AOC), Council & Legal Services Division,
 455 Golden Gate Avenue, San Francisco, CA 94102-3660
 Main AOC telephone: 415.865.4200; Planning: 415.865.7453, 415.865.7658 or 415.865.7654